

High school graduation parties can be great celebrations, but parents can face jail time, fines and even the loss of their home or business if they provide alcohol to a minor who then injures or kills someone.

“Underage drinking or drinking and driving can have serious consequences for adults,” said Scot Adams, director of the Division of Behavioral Health in the Department of Health and Human Services. “The bottom line is that providing alcohol to minors is simply unacceptable.”

Many people dismiss underage drinking as a normal “rite of passage” in adolescence. It is important to remember that although alcohol is legal for adults, it is illegal, unsafe, and unhealthy for youth younger than 21.

Parents can minimize the potential for tragedy and exposure to liability by making sure alcohol is not available to their children and their friends who are underage, he said.

Adams offered these tips to parents who are planning a graduation party:

- Establish firm ground rules and expectations before the party and ask your child to communicate them with his/her guests before the event.
- Make it clear to underage guests that alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are not allowed and be sure to provide plenty of snacks and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Monitor the party area frequently, as well as areas that are off-limits to guests.
- Be prepared to call a guest’s parents if the youth appears to be under the influence or brings alcohol or other drugs to the party.

